

PRESS

**Monterey Jazz Festival**  
**2007-2008**  
**50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tour**



## Monterey Jazz Festival 50th Anniversary Tour

(Royce Hall, UCLA, 1,838 seats, \$48 top) Presented by UCLA Live. Reviewed January 18, 2008.

Performers: Terence Blanchard, Nnenna Freelon, Benny Green, James Moody, Derrick Hodge, Kendrick Scott.  
By RICHARD S. GINELL

Having celebrated its 50th anniversary in September, the Monterey Jazz Festival is determined to keep the party going. The festival started its own record label, Monterey Jazz Festival Records, releasing first a series of historic performances, and just last week, a set from the 2007 festival by a carefully chosen band of all-stars. These same all-stars have been sent on a strenuous 54-date U.S. tour through mid-March, spreading the multi-generational Monterey spirit and making some profound music in unexpected ways.

The jazz legends of the past were represented by a living hero, James Moody, 82, who continues to be a totally assured, fluently boppish force on tenor sax, a splendid flutist and on the puckishly-retitled "Bennies From Heaven," a funny, life-affirming vocalist/entertainer.

Trumpeter Terence Blanchard, singer Nnenna Freelon, and pianist/music director Benny Green represented a middle generation of Young Lions come to maturity. Finally, Blanchard's rhythm section -- bassist Derrick Hodge and drummer Kendrick Scott -- was the youth brigade, steeped in the traditions yet using their instruments with extraordinary subtlety and a multiplicity of techniques.

The repertoire, too, was loaded with significance, making frequent references to performers from Monterey's past -- Dizzy Gillespie's "Be-Bop", Milt Jackson's "Monterey Mist," an excerpt from Gerald Wilson's "Theme For Monterey" suite with new lyrics by Freelon ("Romance (Winter Love)"). The prevailing default style was mainstream, for these musicians aren't out to topple the established musical order.

Yet in the second half of the concert at Royce Hall, some other significant points were made. Clare Fischer's "Pensativa" was brilliantly played by Green, Hodge and Scott entirely at a pianissimo level -- a rare thing in jazz, and a quiet rebuke to the amplified world around them. Blanchard then joined the trio for excerpts from Blanchard's "A Tale Of God's Will (A Requiem For Katrina)" -- a pair of spare, dignified, sometimes emotionally painful dirges, heating up briefly to a stormy protest with Terence wailing up high. At last, jazz was roused from its neutrality to express something important in world affairs, and this music made a far greater impact indoors than it would have at an outdoor festival.

Another big point was how well these leaders seem to get along -- kidding each other, connecting musically, occasionally stretching the envelope (like Freelon's free interpretation of "Skylark" with just Hodge's bass as support). It's important to have fun, too.

Read the full article at: <http://www.variety.com/story.asp?l=story&r=VE1117935847&c=34>

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# Los Angeles Times

## Prime music the way it's made at Monterey

The revered jazz festival's 50th Anniversary Tour All-Stars get into a groove at UCLA.

JAZZ REVIEW By Don Heckman  
Special to The Times

January 21, 2008

The Monterey Jazz Festival, with its golden anniversary coming later this year, is by most estimates the world's longest-running continuous jazz festival. But its more significant attribute has always been that music, not longevity, is the festival's heart and soul.

So it was appropriate that the festival's 50th Anniversary Tour All-Stars at UCLA's Royce Hall on Friday night offered nearly 2 1/2 hours of prime, straight-ahead, mainstream jazz. As in the festival, there were no light shows, no smoke machines, no eardrum-shattering decibels, just a continuing flow of ever-engaging music from trumpeter Terence Blanchard, tenor saxophonist-flutist James Moody, pianist Benny Green, bassist Derrick Hodge, drummer Kendrick Scott and singer Nnenna Freelon.

The pace was set early, if a bit tepidly, in a romp through the melodic maze of Dizzy Gillespie's "Bebop." Although the rhythm section in particular seemed to need a few minutes to find its acoustic togetherness, Blanchard and Moody ripped through choruses, gradually urging the music into a swinging groove that prevailed for the rest of the evening.

The contrasting solo styles of the two horn players reflected the appealing range of musical individuality that has always been characteristic of the Monterey Festival programs.

Blanchard's improvisational passion, always present in the ascending emotional arcs of his solos, was enhanced by a near-vocalized use of slippery, half-valve tones, especially during a series of dark, atmospheric solos on a pair of selections from his New Orleans-inspired CD "A Tale of God's Will."

Moody, on the other hand, has always been a melodist, pure and simple. Whether he was playing a slow-grind blues chorus or ripping fast-fingered runs, a constant melodic focus -- filled with listener-friendly musical handles and an occasional emotional yelp -- was at the center of every one of his choruses.

Freelon was superb, especially during her gorgeous renderings of "Skylark" and "Misty." A thoroughly mature interpretive stylist, she has also refined her voice, her tone shimmering with across-the-spectrum tonal texture, her pitch spot-on. That came on top of the sheer fun of her scat singing with Moody on "Just Squeeze Me" and the sensitivity of her lyric writing (and interpreting) for Gerald Wilson's "Romance (Winter Love)."

The evening was exactly what it was advertised to be -- a mini-version, live snapshot of the Monterey Festival in action. And it succeeded in what it attempted to do -- remind jazz fans that the real festival will again set up its tents in September for another not-to-be-missed celebration of America's music.

## Monterey Jazz Festival celebration a tour de force

### JAZZ REVIEW: Monterey Jazz Festival brings decades of talent to McFarlin

Saturday, February 2, 2008 By THOR CHRISTENSEN / The Dallas Morning News [tchristensen@dallasnews.com](mailto:tchristensen@dallasnews.com)

Sax ace James Moody first played the Monterey Jazz Festival 47 years ago – back when, as he put it Friday night, "none of these gentlemen were even born."

He wasn't joking. The male players in the festival's 50th Anniversary Tour ranged from 27-year-old drummer Kendrick Scott to 45-year-old trumpeter Terence Blanchard. And the band's token female, singer Nnenna Freelon, is still almost 30 years younger than the 82-year-old Mr. Moody.

But for a group with such far-flung experience levels, it meshed seamlessly in its TITAS concert at McFarlin Auditorium. This wasn't one of those all-star bands that seem like a disjointed parade of egos.

Mr. Moody was the group's bona fide legend, having first become a star in the late 1940s. It's tempting to chalk up his career longevity to his amazing versatility: He started off blowing a frenetic sax solo on Dizzy Gillespie's "Bebop," spun 180 degrees for a wistful flute solo in "Winter Love," then laid on the hambone vocals in "Pennies From Heaven."

Mr. Blanchard proved to be just as flexible, moving from a Miles Davis-like whisper to a scream in the Modern Jazz Quartet's "Monterey Mist." Every solo he played was powerful, but the New Orleans native saved the best for last with "Levees" and "Funeral Dirge," tempestuous tunes he wrote for Spike Lee's documentary about Hurricane Katrina.

Ms. Freelon was the show's guest star, appearing for only a handful of tunes. But she made every song count, from her pensive take on "Skylark" to her whimsical scat singing in Duke Ellington's "Just Squeeze Me (but Please Don't Tease Me)."

Leading the band was pianist Benny Green, who Mr. Moody aptly described as "a 44-year-old who still looks like he's 18." The boyish wonder turned out to be a model of restraint: Even when he sprinted across the keys in John Coltrane's "Straight Street," he did it with a sublime touch.

Rounding out the band was bassist Derrick Hodge – who turned in a haunting duet with Ms. Freelon on "Skylark" – and the Houston-raised Mr. Scott, whose parents were in the house. After making his folks take a bow, he made them proud by leading the band through his own "Journey."

Friday's show was part an ongoing profile-raising campaign by the Monterey Jazz Festival, which is well-known in jazz circles but is otherwise obscure. Last year, the fest launched its own label and began releasing concert albums by jazz giants (Dizzy, Miles, Satchmo) as well as one by the 50th-anniversary tour band. But as good as that CD is, it doesn't quite capture the heat the group generated onstage Friday night.

## Monterey Jazz tribute offered an intriguing mix

Jan. 22, 2008 Copyright © Las Vegas Review-Journal

By ANTHONY DEL VALLE  
REVIEW-JOURNAL

You were bound to quickly notice at least two things about the Monterey Jazz Festival 50th Anniversary Tour stopover Sunday at Artemus Ham Hall: The six band members had a personal relationship to the music they were performing, and the passing of half a century has yet to produce any sign of staleness.

The concert -- part of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas' New York Stage and Beyond series -- was a blend of old and new, with a well-structured balance of ballads, full-throttled showstoppers and playful bebop.

The eclectic material allowed each of the performers to achieve a sense of individuality, and then excel in a different manner as a group.

You got the impression they enjoyed not only the music, but each other's company. There was an immediacy to the show, a pulse, that is sometimes lacking in institutions that have been around too long.

Part of the reason for that may be that the artists make for an intriguing generational mix, with the youthful James Moody, 82, on tenor sax and flute; Nnenna Freelon, 53, vocalist; Terrence Blanchard, 45, on trumpet; Benny Green, 45, on piano; Derrick Hodge, 28, on bass; and Kendrick Scott, 27, on drums.

Moody advised the audience, "No matter how old you get, always stay with the younger people. (It discourages) you from complaining about your aches."

If Moody is aching these days, it sure doesn't show. He's a triple threat as musician, vocalist and exuberant stage personality.

Freelon has an ability to "diva-ize" a song with oversized body and voice mannerisms, and then suddenly deliver a quiet, romantic number with startling directness and simplicity.

The chat was kept to a minimum, but what there was felt genuine and spontaneous (although the occasional lapse into excessive self-congratulations should be curbed).

Most of the cast did not seem to be speechmakers, and they made no attempt to be. Their lack of verbal slickness was a part of their charm.

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Find this article at: <http://www.lvrj.com/living/13967262.html>

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## Jazz band wows Gaillard crowd

By Jack McCray

Wednesday, February 6, 2008

There are many festivals in the Charleston area, so why would one come all the way from Monterey, Calif.?

To celebrate the golden anniversary of the Monterey Jazz Festival; that's why.

The Monterey Jazz Festival 50th Anniversary Band, an all-star ensemble, is touring 54 cities. It stopped in Charleston at the Gaillard Municipal Auditorium on Tuesday night, delighting a nearly full house with a broad sampler of some of the songs and ambience from the highly acclaimed fest.

Pianist Benny Green, vocalist Nnenna Freelon, saxophonist James Moody, trumpeter Terence Blanchard, bassist Derrick Hodge and drummer Kendrick Scott, all virtuosos, showed off their wares and demonstrated why Monterey is such a storied gathering.

The band hit the ground running, launching with a spirited version of Cheraw native Dizzy Gillespie's "Bebop," a tune he made popular in several performances over the years at Monterey.

The band was tight, overcoming small sound level problems and turning in dazzling performances.

Next up was a beautiful rendition of John Lewis' "Monterey Mist." The tone poem sounded like Monterey feels, serene and inviting.

Typical of the multi-layering the band exhibited all night, not too far into the song, the rhythm section laid down a bluesy shuffle that was deep in the pocket. It was warmly received, just like most of the other songs.

The irrepressible Moody, 82, was in rare form playing, singing and telling stories. Most enjoyable was his signature, "Bennie's from Heaven," a send-up of "Pennies from Heaven" humorously centered around the questionable paternity of a child.

Blanchard showed why he is firmly ensconced in the jazz trumpet tradition. Like Louis Armstrong, Jabbo Smith, Cat Anderson and, of course, Gillespie, his sound is strong and true, almost with an edge but at the same time sweet and lyrical in its authority.



## Entertainment part of our embarrassment of riches

January 9, 2008

Scott Ayers – Opinion page editors for The Bellingham Herald

*Note: I'll come back to yesterday's discussion of the naming of Wade King Elementary School tomorrow, since so many of you seem to want to debate the issue. But today I'm going slightly off-topic for a minute.*

What does quality of life mean to you?

To me it at least partially means that I am able to attend events like last night's amazing jazz concert at the Mount Baker Theatre.

The show by the Monterey Jazz Festival's 50th Anniversary Band was one of the top five concert experiences I have ever attended – jazz, rock, blues, country, classical, you name it.

The band, a conglomeration of famous jazz artists associated with that legendary festival, played spectacularly. But just as importantly they played with their heart and soul, creating a connection with the audience that left the packed theater alternatively whooping and cheering loudly and in hushed awe. It really was remarkable.

Special recognition here for renowned trumpet player Terrence Blanchard. The songs he played from his suite about his native New Orleans in the aftermath of Katrina, called "Levee" and "Funeral Dirge," were among the most emotionally played live musical pieces I have ever experienced. I had tears in my eyes.

I write this not to celebrate that band though, or that show, but to celebrate the fact that we can enjoy such amazing offerings in little 'ol Whatcom County. Art, music, books, comedy, poetry – we have an embarrassment of riches for a community of such small stature on the national stage.

I would encourage any of you who read this to try and get out more to enjoy those offerings. Whether it's a hot local college rock band playing at a tavern or art gallery walks or performances by comedy troupes, choirs or orchestras, the "scene" in Whatcom County is one of the things that makes living here so uniquely rewarding. Do what you can to be a part of it and you will consider yourself as lucky to live here as I do this morning.

## Monterey Festival Jazzes up Barclay

By Sean Madden

Courtesy Monterey Jazz Festival

Jazz enthusiasts young and old flocked to the Irvine Barclay Theatre last Thursday night to watch some of the industry's top performers show off their chops as a part of the Monterey Jazz Festival 50th Anniversary Tour, one of the longest running and most successful jazz festivals since the music's incarnation.

The ensemble, featuring Benny Green on piano, Terence Blanchard on trumpet, Nnenna Freelon on vocals, James Moody on saxophone and flute, Derrick Hodge on bass and Kendrick Scott on drums, played to a packed house.

Green and his fellow musicians thrust the show into full gear with two opening numbers—extended improvisations designed to allow each player to shine. On “Bebop,” a piece played by Moody with legend Dizzy Gillespie early in his career, drummer Kendrick Scott's solo was particularly notable. His explosive snare attack and the thunderous crash of the cymbals were reminiscent of jazz great Elvin Jones's work on John Coltrane's seminal “A Love Supreme.” “Bebop” was followed by “Monterey Mist,” a gorgeous piece written by longtime artistic director for the festival and pianist of the Modern Jazz Quartet, John Lewis.

Freelon and Hodge's intimate reading of the Johnny Mercer standard “Skylark” was another highlight of the concert's first half. Freelon's hushed vocal, intertwined with Hodge's understated bass, received a roar of applause from several audience members who gave standing ovations.

Probably the most fun performance of the night was Moody's take on the popular standard, “Pennies from Heaven,” substituting the word “pennies” with “Benny's” as an homage to pianist Green. Moody, an octogenarian and by far the oldest member of the ensemble, performed with the energy of a man half his age. He is a triple threat in every sense of the definition; throughout the night, Moody played saxophone, flute and sang. His deft musicianship matched with an indelible sense of humor made him a major hit with the audience, and no doubt won him a slew of new fans.

Though the first half of the concert contained some excellent performances, the concert only got better after the intermission. “Journey,” a mesmerizing piece penned by Scott, was a standout performance during the second half.

Scott wrote the piece last year while he was on a cruise from New York to London. After a few days of travel, the ship sailed into a storm, and the music reflects the tempestuous nature of Scott's voyage. Freelon's vocal complemented the somnambulant subject matter of the lyric, and Scott's drumming was again superb.

Arguably the best performance of the night was by trumpet player extraordinaire Blanchard, along with Scott, Hodge and Green. The quartet performed two selections from the music Blanchard composed for Spike Lee's “When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts,” an HBO documentary on the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. A New Orleans native and Katrina survivor,

Blanchard is still haunted by the experience. The music was inspired by his visit to New Orleans shortly after Katrina took its toll and the stories he heard from those who did not evacuate.

The first piece, "Levees," is a meditation on the plight of the survivors who waited many days to be rescued. The urgency of Hodge's bass and the wail of Blanchard's trumpet evoked images of the water seeping into crumbled buildings, and the people stranded inside or on rooftops, desperate for salvation. The second piece, "Funeral Dirge," was a tour de force both intensely brooding and cathartic at once and featured some of the most impassioned trumpet playing these ears have ever heard.

The music reached a level of almost spiritual fervor; every musician was playing at the top of his game. When the quartet brought the music crashing down, the crowd cheered wildly. Blanchard proved himself to not only be one of the finest composers of our time, but also a dynamic performer who is not afraid to sacrifice his body and soul to the music. The concert concluded with a performance of Duke Ellington's "Just Squeeze Me (But Please Don't Tease Me)," featuring both Freelon and Moody on vocals. There was also an encore performance of Erroll Garner's famous standard, "Misty."

The Monterey Jazz Festival will play select dates throughout the United States. For more information, visit [www.montereyjazzfestival.com](http://www.montereyjazzfestival.com).

FEBRUARY 03, 2008

## IT HAPPENED A LONG WAY FROM MONTEREY

By Ted Giola

If you can't get the whole country to come to the Monterey Jazz Festival, have the MJF go out to the whole country. With that philosophy in mind, the folks on the dream coast have launched a road edition of a festival all-star band, and sent them packing for a 54-city tour.

That's right, 54 cities.

Maybe you're not impressed. You're telling me that Mike Huckabee visited 196 towns in Iowa on a *single* – so why get so jazzed about 54 appearances by six musicians? But in the fragile world of jazz concert tours, this is a big deal. Today, when jazz acts announce a “nationwide” tour, they usually mean a quick visit to four or five concert halls on the coasts and a wave from their first class airline seats for the “flyover states.” In contrast, this little band with the long name – they are known as (pause for breath) The Monterey Jazz Festival Fiftieth Anniversary All-Stars -- are serious about bringing their music to the heartland, and their brutal itinerary harks back to the good old days, when the leading bands racked up more miles than a driver on the NASCAR circuit.

"You may be city number 18 on our tour," singer Nnenna Freelon told the audience at Dallas's McFarlin Auditorum on Friday, "but you are first in our hearts." Is this just a line you tell all the fellas, Nnenna? But the event was certainly special for drummer Kendrick Scott, a Houston native, whose parents were in the audience, as was the esteemed Dr. Robert (Bob) Morgan, who had been Scott's teacher at Houston's High School for the Performing and Visual Arts. And even Freelon had a contingent of old friends from Texarkana who had journeyed to the concert. Stop number 18 can feel like homecoming if there are enough familiar faces around.

Not every musician is game for such a long and winding road-trip. But I am especially impressed that James Moody, now 82 years old, signed on for the tour. Moody first played the Monterey Jazz Festival some 47 years ago – which is before any of his fellow all-stars were born. Of course, Moody doesn't look his age, certainly doesn't *act* it, and his playing shows no signs of excess mileage. Perhaps he was right in crediting his younger bandmates – who also include trumpeter Terence Blanchard, pianist Benny Green and bassist Derrick Hodge – for keeping him feeling robust.

Moody is so skilled as an entertainer that it is easy to forget just how fine a saxophonist he is. He has a great harmonic mind and I have a hunch that he practiced like a demon for many, many years. As a result, his playing is full of those little twists, clever ways of working the changes, that probably most of the audience can't even hear, but get the musicians nodding with assent. If he didn't have such charismatic stage presence, Moody would risk becoming another one of those unsung tenor heroes born in the 1920s and 1930s – I am thinking of saxophonists such as George Coleman, Johnny Griffin, the late Warne Marsh –

who sometimes seem to be playing to impress the other hornplayers rather than for the world at large.

But Moody knows that only a few people in the audience came to hear his smart licks, while they all expect to be entertained. On various occasions, I have heard him hold a crowd in the palm of his hand just with his rambling monologues and funny repartee. Perhaps he learned this from Dizzy during all their years of working together. Gillespie also understood that audiences didn't give hoot whether you improvise with the higher intervals of chord, as long as they have a jolly good time. And if you manage to win the hearts of those who pay their hard-earned cash for the tickets, they will give you leeway to push the music as far as you want. At McFarlin, Moody followed this playbook; he intermixed jokes and gags and funny vocals (the old "Benny's from Heaven" makeover of "Pennies from Heaven") with some killin' sax solos. He even entered into a vocal duet with Freelon on "Squeeze Me," and though it fell short of their [excellent recent recording of this same number](#), it still worked some magic with the audience.

Freelon is an intriguing vocalist, who constantly vacillates between phrasing like a jazz singer and like a soul singer. She does both well. Her intonation is outstanding, and it is clear that she can sing anything she hears, and she can hear almost anything. When she exchanged scat phrases with Moody, she sounded so much like Ella it was almost uncanny. In an introspective duet with bassist Hodge on "Skylark" – the highlight of the concert, in my opinion – she spiced her jazz lines with a double dose of Motown, and the result was quite charming. As an extra bonus, the extravagant hand gestures Freelon uses while she sings (or even listens to the other players) are better than anything you will see short of a *Bharata Natyam* dance performance. Yet her various techniques do not always cohere, and it may ultimately be the case that her very strength – her ability to imitate almost every idiom with ease – will prevent her from ever developing a more holistic and personal style.

Blanchard was also a strong presence on the bandstand. He has become so successful as a composer – Blanchard now has more than 40 film scores to his credit – that he doesn't always rank as high on the *Down Beat* polls and other popularity contests as his talent might warrant. Blanchard's big, brassy tone is a throwback to the Brownie-Navarro school, and he reminds us that playing hot doesn't always mean playing sloppy - a lesson many younger trumpeters still need to learn. Even when playing forcefully, his lines are warm and rounded. It is no surprise that he writes so well for movies, since his ability to balance high energy and great control are always rarities in the jazz world, and make for narrative drama in a solo or a soundtrack. Two pieces from Blanchard's Grammy nominated *A Tale of God's Will (A Requiem for Katrina)* served as centerpieces for the second half of the concert.

Pianist Benny Green acted as informal emcee and musical director for the All-Stars, and he often put his own playing in the background in order to cast attention on his bandmates. His attitude was unassuming, his piano under-miked, and he worked hard at the keyboard to create contrasts and shifts in texture that made everyone sound better. He stretched out at length on just one number, Clare Fischer's lovely "Pensativa," perhaps the finest bossa number ever penned by a non-Brazilian. Here Green reminded us that he is an excellent soloist in his own right, and able to shine amidst this all-star ensemble.

The success of the McFarlin Auditorium concert, presented by TITAS, suggests that the other tour stops will be worth checking out. The remaining concert dates for the Monterey Jazz Festival 50th Anniversary All-Stars can be found [here](#).